

# MILE-A-MINUTE

*Persicaria perfoliata*

Artwork courtesy of Mary A. Hoffelt,  
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## SPECIES AT A GLANCE

*Mile-a-minute, also known as Asiatic tearthumb, is an herbaceous, annual, trailing vine that can grow up to six inches per day. It survives by using its sharp barbs to attach to and climb over other plants to reach sunlight, weakening and smothering them in the process.*

## SPECIES DESCRIPTION

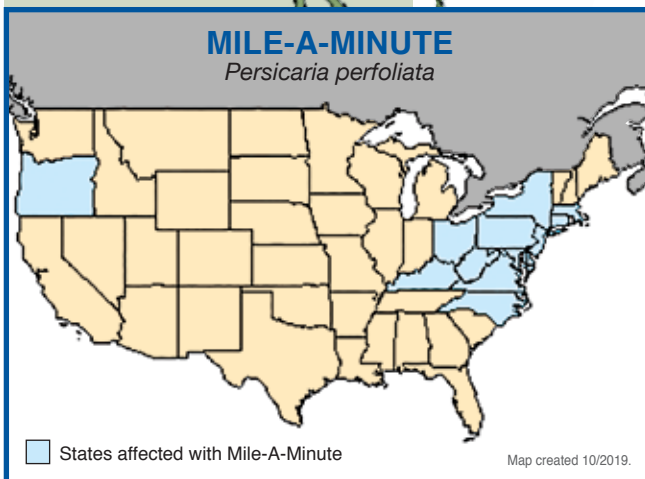
The leaves of mile-a-minute are light green and distinctly shaped like equilateral triangles. They are 3-8 cm (1-3 in) in length and alternate along a thin, delicate stem that can reach lengths of up to 6 m (20 ft). Barbs can be found both on the undersides of the leaves and curving downward along the stems. At each node along the stem, a cup-shaped leafy structure called an ocrea can be found. It is within this structure that flowers bud and fruits emerge. Flowers are small, white, and generally inconspicuous. The fruits are berry-like and a metallic blue color. They are arranged in clusters with each fruit containing a single glossy black or reddish-black hard seed. Some native vine species, including native tearthumbs, may be confused with mile-a-minute; however, these native species lack the equilateral triangle-shaped leaves and the blue berry-like fruits.

## NATIVE & INTRODUCED RANGES

Native to India and eastern Asia, the first successful population of this vine in the United States was in York, Pennsylvania in the late 1930s when it was accidentally introduced through contaminated holly seed. Since then, mile-a-minute has spread throughout much of Pennsylvania, and to all states in the Mid-Atlantic region, as well as Ohio, Kentucky, Massachusetts, and Oregon.

## BIOLOGY & SPREAD

This self-pollinator produces a large number of seeds that can persist in the soil for up to six years. Seeds are carried long distances by birds, which are presumed to be the main cause of long-distance spread. Deer, chipmunks, squirrels, and even ants are known to feed on mile-a-minute fruits. The fruits of mile-a-minute can also remain buoyant in streams or rivers for 7-9 days, allowing them to float to new locations.



Map courtesy of USDA Plants Database.

MILE-A-MINUTE



Photo courtesy of Jil M. Swearingen, USDI National Park Service, Bugwood.org.

# MILE-A-MINUTE



Photo courtesy of Leslie J. Mehrhoff,  
University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org.



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## HABITAT

Mile-a-minute generally colonizes open and disturbed areas along the edges of woods, wetlands, stream banks, roadsides, and uncultivated open fields. It prefers extremely wet environments with full sunlight, although it will tolerate shade for part of the day. Areas that are regularly disturbed, such as power line and utility right-of-ways are prime locations for mile-a-minute establishment.



Photo courtesy of Leslie J. Mehrhoff,  
University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org.

## IMPACTS

### *Threat to biodiversity*

Infestations of mile-a-minute grow rapidly and germinate early in the spring, producing a thick tangle of vines that overtake shrubs and other native vegetation. Mile-a-minute can overtop, shade out, weigh down and even break taller herbaceous plants, woody shrubs, and tree seedlings and saplings. It reduces native plant diversity by reducing access to sunlight and destroying stems and branches by its added weight and pressure.

### *Economic Costs*

Mile-a-minute destroys tree seedlings and saplings, creating problems for nursery and horticulture crops, Christmas tree farms, and forestry operations. It also quickly overruns utility rights-of-way where herbicides are used to control unwanted woody vegetation. Control and restoration costs of areas infested with mile-a-minute range from \$150 to \$1,240 per acre.

## PREVENTION & CONTROL

Several management techniques can be used to control mile-a-minute; however, once established, it can be very difficult and expensive to eradicate and on-going monitoring and management must occur for up to six years to exhaust any seeds remaining in the soil. Possible control mechanism can include manual and mechanical control, such as hand pulling, mowing, or cultivating, chemical control with herbicides, and biological control using the mile-a-minute weevil, which is currently the most promising and cost effective method.



Photo courtesy of USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org.

## References:

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